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THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY OF TODAY

*Studies in Homiletics*¹ is a book intended, as the author says, for beginners in preaching. "And for this reason," to quote his own words, "to the experienced preacher the contents will appear elementary and perhaps mechanical." His estimate is correct. "The book is essentially a book of short sermons, with a description of the conscious mental processes by which they have been produced."

Mr. Wardell's methods and processes may be suggestive to inexperienced preachers and to those of small inventive energy. But they are of the traditional sort, and would not be quickening to ministers of large mold and independent and fruitful quality of mind. These men wish to make their sermons in their own way.

*The Christian Ministry*² is a book of a much higher order. In 1903 the numbers attending church in the Borough of Manhattan in the City of New York for four Sundays were carefully counted, and it was found "that about one-half of the adult population were in the churches on these Sundays." Dr. Abbott says that his book is intended to furnish an answer to the question why so many people are regularly found in the churches. What is the motive that brings them together? The ten chapters of the book have a more or less direct bearing upon his central inquiry.

He first considers "The Fundamental Faiths of the Ministry." Here he gives two definitions of religion. The first is that of Henry Scougal, a minister of the seventeenth century: "Religion is the life of God in the soul of man." The second is Max Müller's: "Religion consists in the perception of the Infinite under such manifestations as are able to influence the moral character of man." In the light of these definitions which Dr. Abbott accepts as essentially correct, he affirms that the main message of the ministry is to life. It brings God to man in Christ. It is concerned with character rather than with opinion.

The minister with such a message speaks with authority. For he has an experience of the life of God in his own soul, and can appeal to a sense of reality in the hearts of men in their hunger for God and the life he can bestow. Men go to church because there they find their deepest yearnings for the Father and his love satisfied.

The Christian minister has a message to the individual which differs from that of the journalist, the teacher, the reformer, the theologian. He

¹ *Studies in Homiletics*. By Robert J. Wardell. London: Kelly. xxiv + 204 pages. 2s. 6d.

² *The Christian Ministry*. By Lyman Abbott. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1905. xix + 317 pages. \$1.50.

is a prophet of God and speaks to the moral personality as they in their spheres cannot. "He is a minister of religion, that is, of the life of God in the soul of man."

The ministry has also a social message; Christ preached the kingdom, which has a social content. It is the business, then, of his ministers to get the Christian temper diffused among those who have industrial and other social difficulties, rather than to make and to administer specific programs for settling industrial differences. The prevalence of the spirit of Christ will inevitably issue in their right settlement. There is imperative call in our time for the preaching of the moral principles that underlie a true social and industrial order.

The chapter on "Some Ministers of the Olden Time" and the "Ministry of Jesus Christ" are in line with the preceding chapters on the fundamental function of an authoritative ministry, which is the drawing and helpful ministry. The Old Testament prophets had vital experience of God, and out of their personal experience they spoke for God to the deepest ethical nature of their contemporaries. The methods of Christ's ministry were attractive; the form of his discourse was concrete and interesting; his message was the expression of his own life; he thereby became a true and helpful example for men. The substance of his preaching was concerned with men in their relation to God, with whom they could hold fellowship and find peace and power, and with the mutual relations of men. He preached righteousness, brotherhood, stewardship, service, love. He emphasized the intrinsic value of the inner life, its superiority to possessions of all sorts. He measured all things by their spiritual values.

The minister must possess certain qualifications for securing and holding congregations. He must be a man of pronounced spiritual life, and have ability to express it. He must have a definite purpose in all his preaching. He must thoroughly prepare himself to preach. He must be a man of candor, courage, hopefulness, patience. He must respect the opinions of others, and sympathize with all classes of people. He must thoroughly know men.

The minister is not only a preacher; he is also a priest. The Puritans and their descendants have relatively over-magnified preaching. The minister speaks both to men for God and to God for men. He is the leader of public worship. As such he interprets men to themselves and to God; he opens the heavens that the people may have vision of God, fall down before him in adoration, and find satisfaction in communion with him. The minister must, therefore, know the members of the congre-

gation in their varied needs, that he may present them to God. Theological seminaries should give increased attention to public prayer, hymnology, and music. To pray well is at least as important as to preach well. Dr. Abbott sounds a true and much-needed note in the chapter on the minister as priest.

While the contents of the book are not formally organized about the central idea with which the author starts out, they are vitally related to it. People are drawn to the churches because there they hear the message of life. They are brought into vital acquaintance with God. Their deepest natures are reached and nourished. They are turned toward repentance, love, service. The book is a valuable one for the modern ministry. It is full of reality, of suggestion, and of inspiration.

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